

The Alaska Inventory and Monitoring Program

What is the Inventory and Monitoring Program?

The I&M Program was established in 1992 to meet the following goals:

- Provide consistent database of information about our natural resources, including species diversity, distribution and abundance.
(*12 Basic Inventories - GPRA Goal Ib1*)
- Determine the current condition of our resources and how they change over time.
(*Monitoring Vital Signs - GPRA Goal Ib3*)

Inventory and Monitoring are 2 key strategies of the Natural Resource Challenge, a multi-year funding initiative begun in FY2000 to revitalize and expand our resource management program.

Program Organization and Administration

Inventories are multi-year, finite projects; vital signs monitoring involves permanent programs. Funding is in WASO I&M base and is distributed annually following review and approval of administrative reports and work plans.

Parks have been organized into 32 ecosystem-based networks nationally, Alaska has 4. Every Alaskan park and network has designated an I&M Lead. An I&M Steering Committee has been established consisting of the Network Coordinators, park and regional specialists, the Regional Science Advisor, and is chaired by the Regional I&M Coordinator.

Networks will establish management and technical committees to plan and implement the monitoring program. Permanent coordinators and data managers will be hired for each network as monitoring funds become available.

Biological Inventory Activities

Bibliographies and expected species lists were developed for the Alaska Region by the Alaska Natural Heritage Program, and the information is stored in two of the national natural resources databases (NPSpecies and NatureBib). These databases are being updated with new information as the Biological Inventories progress. Other information management tools are available (Database Template, Dataset Catalog and the GIS Theme Manager) and will be populated as the inventory and monitoring is implemented.

Ecological maps at the subsection level have been completed and are available through the GIS Theme Manager. These are used to stratify the landscape for sample selection and extrapolating inventory results. They are also used by the landcover mapping program and the water resources inventory effort.

The four Alaska networks are currently conducting inventories of vertebrates and vascular plants. Small mammals are being inventoried in all parks except SEAN, freshwater fish in CAKN and SWAN, montane nesting shorebirds in ARCN, marine and estuarine fish in SEAN, and vascular plants in all parks. Most field inventory was completed in FY03, with final reports, GIS layers, and databases produced in FY04.

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Vital Signs Monitoring Activities

The Vital Signs Monitoring Program has begun in all Alaska networks. Each network received planning funds from the I&M Program in their "start up" year, and operational funding for vital signs and water quality monitoring in subsequent years. CAKN received planning funding in FY01, SWAN in FY02, and ARCN and SEAN in FY03. All have filled Network Coordinator positions. Data Managers have been hired in CAKN and SWAN and will be soon in the remaining networks.

Networks are developing their monitoring strategies following a phased approach. Phase I includes gathering background information, developing conceptual ecological models, and formulating initial objectives. Selection of indicators (vital signs) occurs during Phase II. Phase III involves developing overall sample design, sampling protocols, and a data management plan.

The Central Alaska Network has completed Phase II of their program development. A Scoping Workshop was held in April 2002 during which draft monitoring strategies for aquatic, physical, fauna, and flora were evaluated. An integrated team linked the strategies together into a holistic ecological model and fitted vital signs within that framework.

The Southwest Alaska Network has initiated background work and conducted mini-scoping sessions for coastal, freshwater and terrestrial resources. SWAN completed their Phase I Report in September 2003.

The Arctic Network has initiated the compilation of background material and planning for the monitoring program. The Southeast Alaska Network will follow during FY04.

Pilot monitoring studies and synoptic surveys will be carried out during and immediately after the Monitoring Plan development. For example, water quality surveys have been carried out in conjunction with fish inventory activities in CAKN and SWAN.

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